

**Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group - Groupe de travail orthodoxe-catholique Saint-Irénée
Gemeinsamer orthodox-katholischer Arbeitskreis Sankt Irenäus**

Orthodox Co-secretary:

Prof. Dr. Nikolaos **Loudovikos**
Hortiatis 57010
Thessaloniki
Greece / Griechenland
Phone: +30-2310-348004
Telefax: +30-2310-300360
E-mail: nloudovikos@aeath.gr

Catholic Co-secretary:

Dr. Johannes **Oeldemann**
Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut f. Ökumenik
Leostr. 19 a, 33098 Paderborn
Germany / Deutschland
Phone: +49-5251-8729804
Telefax: +49-5251-280210
E-Mail: J.Oeldemann@moeblerinstitut.de

Communiqué – Halki 2015

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group met for its twelfth annual meeting from 4 to 8 November 2015 in the historic Theological School of the Ecumenical Patriarchate which is located in the Holy Trinity Monastery on the island of Halki (Heybeliada, Turkey). The 2015 meeting was chaired by the Orthodox Co-President of the Working Group, Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos, and by the Catholic Co-President, Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg, Germany.

At the opening session on Wednesday evening, November 4, the group met with the Abbot of the monastery, Metropolitan Elpidophorus (Lambriniadis) of Bursa. During the meeting the members of the group attended the daily monastic prayers. On Sunday, the participants attended the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of St. George in the Phanar. Thereafter, they were graciously received at the center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The papers at this year's meeting dealt with the emergence of national churches in 19th-century Orthodoxy, the notion of *communio/koinonia* and its ecumenical relevance and the understanding of authority in the Church. In addition, intensive work took place on the draft of a document which is meant to give an overview of the work done over the years by the Working Group. The results of this year's meeting were summarized by the participants in the following theses:

Theses on the emergence of national churches in South-Eastern Europe in the 19th century:

(1) Unlike the ancient patriarchates and the Church of Russia, the formation of autocephalous national churches in South-Eastern Europe was closely connected with the establishment of national states in the 19th century. Different but interrelated factors such as territory, ethnicity, state, politics, and language played a part in this. Their ecclesiological relevance calls for further clarification. The national churches were expected to assist the formation of the national states and the consolidation of their national identity.

(2) The formation of the autocephalous national churches in South-Eastern Europe (Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians) followed different patterns, but also exhibited a number of common traits: the majority of South-European ethnic groups lived in more than one country, with the result that several church structures had emerged for each of them. Moreover, the governments of the newly established national states wanted the proclamation of autocephalous churches on their territory, which led to a discussion on whether the church in the new state should end its relationship with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Bulgarians, however, followed a different path: in their case the movement towards church autonomy, namely the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate by the Sultan, preceded the independence of the state.

(3) Concerning the recognition of autocephaly, it should be kept in mind that all these newly established churches had been under the jurisdiction the Patriarchate of Constantinople. After the complete independence of the new national states, the autocephaly of the new national churches was subsequently recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the basis of the territorial-canonical principle. The Ecumenical Patriarch, together with the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, reacted to the Bulgarian aspirations for autonomy by condemning ethnophyletism at a synod in Constantinople in 1872; they would not accept a separate jurisdiction for the Orthodox

Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire because that would have set the ethnic principle above the territorial principle; this resulted in a schism that was overcome only after the Second World War.

(4) All this led to a change in the understanding of autocephaly during the 19th century. It was no longer considered to be a matter of internal church order but became a sign of independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Ecclesial autocephaly was seen as parallel to state sovereignty. One consequence of this development was confusion between the ethnic and the territorial principles in church structure. This became a problem because the geographic boundaries of ethnic groups and the borders of states did not always coincide.

Theses on the notion of communio/koinonia:

(5) The reality of the Church as participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit is made fully apparent in the light of the Eucharistic mystery. The *koinonia* of the Church is grounded in the proclamation of the Gospel and the confession of the apostolic faith which it contains, consolidated by the church's ministry in word and sacrament. The celebration of the Eucharist is the key event in which the *koinonia* of the Church is experienced.

(6) In principle, sacramental communion presupposes unity in faith. However, the precise extent of this unity in faith needs clarification. This applies within our churches, where there is the question of the relation between the faith of the Church and the faith of the individual, and between our churches, where criteria are needed to clarify what is absolutely essential for a common celebration of the Eucharist.

(7) The conception of the Church as a congregation of believers gathered in the Holy Spirit around Christ present in the word and the Eucharist requires and always presupposes communion among all the local churches that are presided over by a bishop. Each congregation celebrating the Eucharist ultimately under the presidency of the bishop is aware that it is within the *koinonia* of the whole Church. It is from the Eucharist that it derives its membership in this broader community.

(8) The recognition of the full reality of the Eucharistic mystery is the foundation of the mutual recognition of churches as the Church of Jesus Christ. From a Catholic point of view, the ecclesial status of other churches depends on the extent to which the sacraments in these churches are realized. In the Orthodox Church, there are historically conditioned different practices regarding the recognition of ecclesial reality and the validity of the sacraments of the non-Orthodox; so far, there is no agreement about this among the various Orthodox local churches.

Theses on the relevance of authority in the Church:

(9) As in every human society, the phenomena of authority and power are present in the Church. Authority concerns the influence of a person or an institution that is grounded on tradition or competence and the prestige that accrues from it. Power, on the other hand, has to do with the possibility of using certain means and procedures in order to make decisions for others.

(10) Holy Scripture describes authority and power in different ways. Thus, there are persons with different gifts in the Church who receive and exert authority in various areas, as Eph 4,11 shows: "And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers." This demonstrates that authority in the Church is always linked to the community. Authority and power are dependent on each other, even if there are cases of spiritual authority in the Church that are not connected to a church office. Saints such as Starets Silvan of Mount Athos and Mother Teresa are cases in point.

(11) We are of the common conviction that the use of power in the Church is meaningful only if exercised according to the model of the crucified Christ, as a service and not as a way of dominating others (cf. Mk 10,42-45 par; Jn 13,1-17). This applies also to the exercise of primacy at its various levels. The means at the disposal of those who exercise primacy are to be employed only in this spirit. It is regrettable that, although those in authority place so much emphasis on service, charisma and love, some of them identify themselves with their own power to such an extent that the true meaning of primacy is obscured. A sense of accountability would consequently show more clearly the interdependence of a primate and his community.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group is composed of 26 theologians, 13 Orthodox and 13 Catholic, from a number of European countries and the USA. It was established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), and has met since then in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), Thessaloniki (Greece) and Rabat (Malta). At this year's meeting on Halki near Istanbul (Turkey), it was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Working Group in November 2016 at Taizé (France).

